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Soviet affairs consultant says Andropov probable replacement

PORTLAND, Ore.

Ex-KGB chief Yuri Andropov, who "speaks excellent English and has visited America," is the likely choice to replace Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, a former Central Intelligence Agency official said Thursday.

Arthur Macy Cox, who also is an author and consultant on Soviet affairs, told a news conference that Andropov's selection heading Brezhnev's funeral arrangement committee was a "tip" he had the support to become the new leader.

"The decision was made by the entire Politburo," explained Cox. "Normally you would have thought arrangements would be made by (Brezhnev's) friend and heir-apparent (Konstantin) Chernenko."

Cox, a former senior fellow of the Brookings Institution and author of "Russian Roulette -- the Superpower Game," speculated a "collegial" group of Kremlin leaders would take over. He noted Brezhnev and Andrei Kosygin were part of such a group when Nikita Khrushchev was ousted as leader in 1965.

"If in one month, one man emerges as the leader, my guess is that it would be Andropov," Cox said.

Cox, who took part in a Portland State University symposium entitled "Solutions to the Nuclear Arms Race," said the selection of the former intelligence chief would be a beneficial choice for Soviet-American relations. He said Andropov was an expert in nuclear arms and arms control.

"He would be from our standpoint the best man," said Cox. "He speaks excellent English and has visited America."

Andropov has a record of supporting arms control with the United States. He said Politburo leaders who "are ready to deal tomorrow."

Cox downplayed a major shift in Soviet policy no matter who is elected leader.

Also seeing no change in the Soviet position on weapons negotiations was Herbert Scoville Jr., a former CIA deputy director of research and president of the Arms Control Association. But Brezhnev's success would be "less prone to make concessions," Scoville said at the news conference.

"We must recognize he (the successor) cannot appear to be kowtowing to the Americans," Scoville said. "Don't look for any major breakthroughs or negative breakthroughs."